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Waterloo Lutheran Seminary
SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATOR IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW
TESTAMENT PARABLE AS A SYLLOL

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF DIVINITY

BY
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APRIL 1970

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23962

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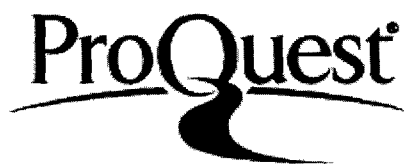
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SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE
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INTRODUCTION

In September 1967, the Lutheran Brotherhood sponsored a series of lectures at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary dealing with "Man and His World". One of the speakers in this series was Gregory Baum who spoke on "Man and His World: a New Naturalism?". The following excerpt is from his presentation.

Man is essentially a listener: man is one who listens, who is summoned. The summons comes to us from other people, it comes to us in our situation, it comes to us from within history; ultimately, the summons which comes to us is the redemptive call coming from God. As man responds to the summons that creates him, that is, determines his history, he comes to be a person through listening and responding. Man's personhood is the realization of a dialogue, ultimately the realization of a dialogue of salvation with God. Man is not a finished being, closed with a definite nature; and his future is not simply the mapping out of that nature. Rather, man is a listener, man is open-ended, he is summoned; that which comes to him is often unexpected, new and surprising. We know that the future will be unexpected because God is redemptively involved with human life. The newness in man always comes to him as a surprise.¹

Man's becoming human, his realization of personhood comes through listening and responding; man becomes man through dialogue, dialogue with himself, with others, with society and with God.

It is important to understand and appreciate this idea. It is essential to be aware of the fact that it is through a process of dialogue that man grows.

Working on an aspect of this subject of man in dialogue

¹Gregory Baum, "Man and His World," Footnotes, ed. E. R. Riegert (Waterloo: Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, 1968), II, 25.

is my area of concern in this thesis. If man becomes human through processes of dialogue, then the area concerning various communicators becomes relevant and important. My work will deal basically with this area of the communicator, the method of dialogue. There has been much written on this subject of man, the communicator and in this particular area of the means of communication. There will probably be much more written on it in the future. My thesis is part of an ongoing discussion.

The title of my thesis is "Some Characteristics of an Effective Communicator in the light of the New Testament Parable as a Symbol". This area is a fascinating one. The symbol is an exciting means of communication. We live in a computer age. This fact and its subsequent influence on human beings is one major reason why I find the symbol a fascinating subject. In this computer age everything appears to be programmed. Computers are used to draw up one's bank balance, to project the economic future of the nation, to project the needs of an individual in the year 1980. Man himself has been programmed. In this programmed society it is almost impossible for man to remain a human being much less grow in his humanness.

In this society of programming, the use of symbolism is again gaining popularity. It is becoming popular because man is more than a programmed piece of flesh; man is an experiencing individual who has experiences and needs not to

be handled by a logical system of programmes. He needs means of communication available to him which will assist him in being the person who is capable of listening to life and responding to it.

By discussing some of the characteristics of an effective communicator in the light of the New Testament parable as symbol I will attempt to present this idea of man in dialogue, needing means of communication which will assist him instead of killing him.

I will discuss the symbol in terms of what it is and how it functions to assist mankind. This discussion will shed light on the New Testament parable as a means of communication which makes use of symbolism. The opposite is also true; the parable will also illuminate the how of using a symbol, how it becomes relevant in communication.

The thesis will be set up in two sections, each section containing three chapters.

The first section is entitled "The Symbol as Communication". The first chapter in this section deals with arriving at a definition of a symbol and some of its basic characteristics. When discussing the characteristics of a symbol, Paul Tillich's thoughts will be used.

Moving from chapter one, the second chapter deals with the function of the symbol: what it does for people in communication. Basically the symbol provides form and substance to man's existence. In this chapter a survey is

presented of the ideas of many writers on this subject. From this survey is developed an understanding of what it means when one says that the symbol opens up new levels of reality.

Growing out of the discussion of the symbol: its definition, characteristics and functions, there is a setting down of some of the characteristics of an effective communicator. This is what the third chapter contains. It is a brief chapter, presenting these characteristics succinctly and serving as a transition from the discussion on the symbol to a discussion of the parable as symbol.

Section two grows from and enlarges upon section one. The title of this section is "Symbolic Characteristics of the New Testament Parable". In this section, then, the New Testament parable as symbol is discussed as an example of a means of communication. This serves to reveal the characteristics of an effective communicator in action, so to speak. Also in this section, use is made of the political cartoon to serve as an illustration of some of the symbolic characteristics of the parable.

Chapter one of this section deals with the parable: a definition and its characteristics. Basically it is an attempt to gain an understanding of what this genre is and what some of its peculiar aspects are.

The parable as symbol is the topic of discussion in the second chapter. The parable is a symbol and uses symbolic imagery is the idea which consumes most of this chapter. By

definition and example this idea is expanded and clarified. Also in this vein, the political cartoon enters to serve as an illustration. As the discussion of the parable as symbol proceeds, the characteristics of an effective communicator become apparent.

The final chapter in this section and this thesis is the conclusion. In this conclusion a set of criteria is set down to serve as an evaluation of a communication system, whether that system be a personal one or a corporate one. Also this conclusion contains a few statements concerning man's need for communication. These thoughts grow out of the initial thoughts of this introduction and from the content of this thesis.

This is basically my reason for pursuing this subject and the direction in which it travels.

SECTION ONE

THE SYMBOL AS COMMUNICATION

I: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SYMBOL

Two things will be dealt with in this chapter: first, it is necessary to gain a working definition of the word "symbol". Secondly, growing from this definition will come a discussion of some of the basic characteristics of a symbol. The second part of the chapter will be an analysis of Paul Tillich's discussion on said subject.

To begin, a very simple definition of a symbol is that it is an object, word or concept which is used to point to something or someone beyond itself, to some sort of reality which is unapproachable except through symbols.

The word "symbol" is derived from the Greek word, *συνβαλλειν*, which means "to bring together", "unite", or "to knit together".

Everett Stowe in Communicating Reality Through Symbols discusses the Greek derivation quite fully.

The specific term "symbol" has its roots in Greek. The noun symbolon was applied to an ancient custom of hospitality of the Greek people. After an occasion of hospitality, a Greek host would give a departing guest a broken-off half of a ring or coin. The two parts would again be matched on some future occasion. And in the absence of the two friends from each other, the part that each retained would represent graphically the whole experience of entertainment and of continuing friendship.²

In this Greek custom of hospitality, the broken half of a ring or a coin has become a symbol. By itself it is nothing

²Everett M. Stowe, Communicating Reality Through Symbols (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 23.

more than a broken half of a coin or ring. But when it is used to indicate, or to point to, something else other than itself, it becomes a symbol. In this case, the symbol represented to both the host and the guest the situation they enjoyed together: the warm friendship, an entertaining evening, and a hope of another time when the two would meet each other again. In the return meeting the two would match the broken halves, symbolizing this reunion.

Stowe goes on to say that "what is brought together in the symbol is not things but concepts"³. A symbol is "an interpretation by mind and imagination of something that has entered into the field of observation"⁴.

To build on Stowe's ideas, another example might be in order. Suppose an individual were travelling by bus across the country. He is alone; it is about eleven o'clock in the evening. The bus on which he is travelling makes a scheduled four hour stop in some large city. It has been raining all day and hasn't let up that evening at all. This individual, instead of sitting in the bus terminal for four hours, decides to go for a walk. The streets are wet, cold and almost vacant. A poorly dressed old man staggers along the street grabbing at short intervals at the buildings for some type of support. No one is around to pick him up even

³Ibid., 24.

⁴Ibid.

if he stumbles and falls. A police officer paces by; his eyes contain only question marks; no friendly hello or how are you appears. Music blares from some night club but there is no desire to enter into the "happy" atmosphere. After a long, wet four hours he climbs back into the bus and continues his journey. Three weeks later he's listening to the radio and a new song is introduced. A famous group had visited the same city and decided to write a song about it. The song deals with the fabulous qualities of the people of that city. But as this individual listens to the new song, no fabulous qualities does he see; he can remember only the old man stumbling along the street, the policeman with the question-mark eyes and the music coming from some place where people were supposedly having fun. This song brings back those long, lonely four hours on some street in a city that was wet, cold and "uninhabited".

The example ends but I feel that the point is made. The name of that town, contained in a song, becomes for that man a symbol representing and pointing to a lonely experience.

From these two examples, Stowe's and mine, a few initial aspects of a symbol can be observed. A symbol is a representation; it represents something other than itself. The broken half of a coin or a ring represented a good experience where hospitality, friendship and enjoyable times abounded. The song, on the other hand, represented a lonely night on the streets of some unknown, cold city.

To expand upon this representative quality, the symbol also brings together concepts. In the Greek custom, the concept of friendship was prevalent; with the song, the concept of loneliness prevailed.

The word "concept" is somewhat deceiving here. The symbol does not represent only the concept of something, but more specifically it represents that "something". In the examples previously postulated, concepts were represented to some degree, but what makes the symbol so valuable and necessary is that it represents that actual experience itself; the broken half of a coin represents the actual enjoyment the guest experienced; the song represented the actual loneliness the individual experienced. The symbol, in representing an actual experience, serves to put form and substance to that experience; it conceptualizes the experience. But in conceptualizing it, this does not mean that it takes away from the experience but makes the experience much richer.

By its ability to conceptualize the symbol also has a graphic quality. It puts form and substance to a feeling. How does one describe friendship or loneliness? What words in our vocabulary best describe these feelings, these experiences? The answer appears to be that these experiences are best described by some concrete thing which stands for that experience.

If I speak of friendship, I usually do so in terms of

what has happened to me. For example, I participated in a Group Life Institute in North Carolina about a year ago. As the week progressed, the fourteen of us in our group got to know each other very well. On Thursday evening after having gone through a rather tense and hectic period in working through some conflicts, the group of fourteen arose and stood in a circle with our arms around each other. No words were spoken; no words needed to be spoken. Warmth, friendship and understanding flowed nonverbally one to another, the arms symbolizing the ties that we had one with each other.

Friendship, in this case, would be best described and represented by the picture of a group of people standing in the middle of a room with their arms around each other.

To return to the individual walking a lonely street on a rainy night, loneliness, in his case, may be best described and represented by the song containing the name of that certain city, or, it could even be represented or pointed to by experiencing again a rainy night all alone.

This brings us to another important aspect in discussing the definition of a symbol. It is not only graphic. Nor is it only a representation putting form and substance to some feeling or experience. It also must be said that a symbol grows from an experience. The departing guest had been entertained by his host at a specific time and in a concrete place. The travelling man had walked that lonely, rain-drenched street for four hours. I had experienced a Group

Life Institute.

To push this idea even further, in order for the symbol to have any meaning, or in order for it to point to something of someone other than itself, the person using it or seeing it must bring to it a certain amount of understanding.

Another incident might serve to clarify this idea. If I took a piece of chalk and wrote the phrase "Black Tuesday" on the blackboard and then showed it to a group of people who were of different ages, what would be their response? This phrase refers to the day the stock market hit bottom, when many people lost everything they owned and the country was in a state of bankruptcy. A person sixty years old would recognize this phrase immediately and would have brought back to him many vivid memories of hardship and tightened belts. A person who was only a young child at the time would probably bring to it his experiences of seeing mother stretching the food beyond the limits of stretching. He may even remember the days when the family would have potatoes for dinner and have the water in which the potatoes were boiled made into soup for supper. A teenager, fifteen years old, could quite possibly ask "What does this mean?". Or if he does recognize the phrase he most likely would say "Oh, Black Tuesday! That's when the stock market fell and people jumped out of the windows into the street below". And then he would continue speaking about the fantastic time he had at the party the night before.

Most of the examples so far, with the exception of the Greek custom of hospitality, are very individualistic. That is, they pertain only to and are understood by one individual or a small group of people. The Greek custom of hospitality is the exception in that it probably was a social custom known by the members of that society. Thus the broken half of a coin or a ring could be given by any host to any guest and this symbolic act would carry with it the full meaning, that of friendship and what had occurred at that meal. On the other hand, the symbol of the group of people standing with their arms around each other would carry full meaning only for that group of fourteen. Even narrower, the song of the city carried with it a specific feeling of loneliness only for that individual person who had his own experience. It might become a similar symbol for another person if the individual who had this unique experience could share it with another person.

This last discussion is an important one when dealing with the symbol as communication. It is vital because this aspect of the definition of the symbol deals with a basic need concerning the awareness of the persons with whom a person is communicating. The question concerning what the listener brings to the situation: his own ideas, thoughts and experiences, is a vital one to consider in any type of meaningful and effective communication. (Note Tillich's discussion of the fourth characteristic of the

symbol in the following discussion.)

Tillich postulates this basic idea as a definition for a symbol:

A real symbol points to an object which can never become an object. Religious symbols point to the transcendent but do not make the transcendent immanent.⁵

Tillich, in working on his definition, concludes that the symbol has four basic characteristics. He states that the first and basic characteristic of the symbol is "its figurative quality". By this he means that the symbol has something other than itself in view. The examples previously postulated (the broken half of a coin or a ring, the picture of a group of people standing with their arms around each other, the song about a specific city) are not important in themselves; they say nothing more than what they physically are. They themselves are not important, but that to which they point, that which they represent, is of importance, is of value. Tillich words it this way:

this characteristic implies that the inner attitude which is applied to the symbol does not have the symbol itself in view but rather that which is symbolized in it.⁶

The second characteristic which a symbol has, according to Tillich, is "its perceptibility". He believes that the

⁵Paul Tillich, "The Religious Symbol", Myth and Symbol, ed. F. W. Dillistone (London: S.P.C.K., 1966), p. 17.

⁶Paul Tillich, "The Religious Symbol", Symbolism in Religion and Literature, ed. Rollo May (New York: George Braziller, 1960), p. 75.

symbol presents a means of visualizing or conceptualizing something or some quality which is ideal or transcendent. To repeat a previous question: How does one describe or speak about the quality or feeling of friendliness or loneliness? "The ideal or the transcendent is made perceptible in the symbol and is in this way given objectivity."⁷

Thirdly, Tillich feels that the symbol also has an "innate power". In order to grasp what Tillich is attempting to portray here, one must discover what he says when he speaks about the difference between signs and symbols.

In his article, "The Religious Symbol", he makes this terse explanation concerning the third characteristic of the symbol.

The third characteristic of the symbol is its innate power. This implies that the symbol has a power inherent within it that distinguishes it from the sign which is impotent in itself. This characteristic is the most important one. It gives to the symbol the reality which it has almost lost in ordinary usage, as the phrase "only a symbol" shows. This characteristic is decisive for the distinction between a sign and a symbol. The sign is interchangeable at will. It does not arise from necessity, for it has no inner power. The symbol, however, does possess a necessary character. It cannot be exchanged. It can only disappear when, through dissolution, it loses its inner power. Nor can it merely be construed; it can only be created. Words and signs originally had a symbolic character. They conveyed the meaning which they expressed, with an inherent power of their own. In the course of evolution and as a result of the transition from the mystical to the technical view of the world, they have lost their symbolic character. Once having lost their innate power they become signs.⁸

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 76.

This explanation, given by Tillich, is not that clear. Thus some of the important ideas contained in it must be clarified in order to facilitate our definition of a symbol.

The phrase "innate power" is descriptive of some of the qualities of the symbol. These qualities are described in the quotation by the ideas that the symbol has power in itself. What Tillich seems to be saying is that because something is a symbol it has the quality of bringing about some type of reaction from the person for whom the symbol is meant. It carries the person to the point where he can grasp the "ideal and the transcendent". In a very real sense, the person's awareness of the symbol enables that person to participate in the reality to which the symbol points and which it represents. This is due to the fact that the symbol itself participates in the reality to which it points.

This is one basic distinction, made by Tillich, which lies between the sign and the symbol. In Theology of Culture Tillich states that "symbols are similar to signs in that they both point to something beyond themselves"⁹. But he goes on to say that "the difference, the fundamental difference between them, is that signs do not participate in any way in the reality and power of that to which they point"¹⁰.

⁹Paul Tillich, "Theology of Culture", ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 54.

¹⁰Ibid.

To digress from Tillich's argument for a moment, Erich Kahler in his article on "The Nature of the Symbol" also discusses the relationship of the sign and the symbol. A look at his discussion may enlighten us to the distinction Tillich is postulating.

Kahler discusses the growth and becoming of a symbol in an evolutionary framework. In a sense, he is discussing the growth of language.

He begins by saying:

The most rudimentary, inarticulate form of utterance in sound or gesture is mere expression, that is to say, a reaction to the stimuli of pain or joy, want or fear. It is, however, only a sign of something, not, or not necessarily, a sign made to or intended for somebody.¹¹

But language grows, according to Kahler. There develops a desire on the part of the creature uttering a sound to get something across to another. In attempting to make contact with those around, communication occurs. "Utterance turns into language when contact with the environment is sought, and, through sound or gesture, some kind of communication occurs."¹²

Thus there is a difference between expression and communication in Kahler's mind. He feels that expression is caused by something. Communication, on the other hand, is directed to someone with a purpose in mind. "An intentionally

¹¹Erich Kahler, "The Nature of the Symbol", Symbolism in Religion and Literature, ed. Rollo May (New York: George Braziller, 1960), p. 50.

¹²Ibid.

communicative utterance however, is not simply a sign of an experience; it signi--fies something, it is not, it makes a sign."¹³

This movement from mere expression to directed communication (signals) is very important.

Through communication the living being is carried beyond its sheer existence, much farther than by pure expression. It has found a target, indeed an anchorage, in the environment. A partner, a counterpart, has come into play, that will respond to, occasionally counter, and by this challenge reflect on, the correspondent's existence.¹⁴

This communication becomes more complex and intricate.

Kahler goes on to say:

And in the course of this developing dialogue the means of communication unfold, a vast world of multifarious and multilevel articulation of words and concepts and universe of discourse, all of which, growing weightier and weightier, even more objectified and autonomous, come increasingly to split existence into different sections and layers.¹⁵

It is at this split in existence that the symbol comes into being. Kahler says that "the symbol originates in the split of existence, the confrontation and communication of an inner with an outer reality, whereby a meaning detaches itself from sheer existence"¹⁶.

What Kahler is saying is that man's desire for

¹³Ibid., 51.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., 53.

communication with others leads to the development of symbols. More specifically, these symbols grow out of the formation of signs.

Signs are made; they are an attempt at bridging the ideas, thoughts and questions of an individual with another. "Any made sign is a bridging act, an act of pointing to something or somebody."¹⁷

One distinctive fact or characteristic of a sign is that it has not parted from the living creature; it does not have a separate identity on its own, or more specifically, it does not take on the identity of the object to which it points. For example, the traffic light is a sign. It points to the fact that when it is red one must stop. But it does not take on the characteristics of the whole process of stopping; it only points to the fact that a "stopping" situation must occur. Or as Kahler would say: "it signifies something it is not"¹⁸.

According to Kahler, there are three separate things happening when a sign is in use; there are three separate entities to observe. First, there is the object that does the pointing: the stop light. Then there is the object to which it points: the need to stop at a certain time and place. Finally, there is the act of pointing: the process by the

¹⁷Ibid., 54.

¹⁸Ibid., 51.

individual seeing the red light knows he has to stop and functions accordingly. The basic idea prevalent in our understanding of the sign is that it only signifies something, points to something; it doesn't participate in the actual process of stopping when one sees a red light.

A symbol, on the other hand, has grown beyond this "sign-nature".

The signal marks the transition from expression to communication; and all the various kinds and stages of symbols which we have considered so far, the word, the tool, the number, the magic, and the rational formula, the law of nature, all of them are frozen acts of communication--communication, first through bridging, and later through abridgement, contracting and abstracting abridgement.

But anything frozen, anything settled in a steady form, tends to become autonomous; it starts a life of its own. So any act of designation, as soon as it is firmly established, no longer merely points to or "points out" something; it gradually comes to represent the thing it points to. If stabilization of a sign may be seen as the preliminary, and fixation of the sign as the first stage, of the symbol, representation is its second and final stage.¹⁹

What Kahler is saying is that the symbol takes on an identity of its own. It becomes totally involved with that to which it points; it not only points to that something but also represents the very characteristics of that something. Herein lies its "innate power". It has taken on the qualities of the object it is representing.

To quote Kahler again:

¹⁹Ibid., 57.

The symbol is something concrete and specific that is intended to convey something spiritual or general, either as an indicating sign, that is, an act of pointing, or an actual representation in which the dynamic division of the sign is abolished; that which points, that which it points to, and the act of pointing, have become one and the same. The Greek word symballein, from which "symbol" derives, means: "to bring together" or "to come together". The symbolic sign brings together, the symbolic representation is a coming together, to the point of complete fusion, of the concrete and spiritual, the specific and the general.²⁰

For example, one's awareness of the cross enables one to participate in the realities of that symbol; it enables one to participate in what the cross represents, that is, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the idea and belief of forgiveness and eternal life. The cross, as a symbol, with its innate power, with its characteristics of becoming one with that which it symbolizes, is able to carry the person to the reality of it; it is able to reveal the reality of forgiveness and eternal life; it allows the individual to grasp that reality. The cross is the complete fusion of the concrete (the cross itself) and the spiritual (the reality of death and resurrection, of forgiveness and hope of eternity).

This rather long and complicated discussion of the sign and the symbol hopefully indicates what Tillich means by saying that the third characteristic of the symbol is its "innate power".

The fourth characteristic of the symbol, according to

²⁰Ibid., 70.

Tillich, is "its acceptability as such". This characteristic is a rather important one, especially when dealing with the area of communication. For Tillich, this idea implies that the process by which a symbol becomes a symbol and the acceptance of it as a symbol belong together. In other words, a symbol is meaningless if it is not accepted by a society or a segment of it.

According to Tillich, "the act by which a symbol is created is a social act, even though it first springs forth from an individual"²¹.

Let us go back to the example of the man walking the streets of a strange city on a lonely, rainy night. The name of the city in a certain song became for that individual person a symbol of his experience in that city. It was meaningful for him alone and no one else. Tillich would go so far as to say that this would not even be a symbol, but a devised sign to aid that individual in remembering an incident or a feeling of loneliness.

"If something is to become a symbol for an individual, it is always so in relation to the community which in turn can recognize itself in it."²²

This statement is valid when looking at a community or society of people. Let us take as an example, the church.

²¹Tillich, The Religious Symbol, p. 77.

²²Ibid.

Here we have a group of people who are organized and brought together by a certain belief and faith. The means by which the church functions as the church depends on the thinking and ideas of the people therein. One symbol of this group of people is the symbol "Father" as it is descriptive of God. The word-symbol is a symbol accepted by the group and carries with it a means of understanding the personhood of God. This is a symbol for the group. It is also a symbol for each specific individual in that group. It even becomes a symbol for a person, strange to the creeds of this group, who has entered and become part of the group. And it is relatively easy for that stranger to accept this symbol of God as "Father" because of the fact that the "Father" symbol is a socially (group) accepted symbol.

But what if an individual entered this group, the church, and decided to impose his symbol of God, a symbol unknown by the group, upon the group. To push this argument, let's say that the individual's symbol of God was that of an "iceberg". God is an iceberg. Thus this individual sees God or experiences God as some cold, distant being, unaware and not concerned about the people who worship Him. This individual's symbol would contrast drastically with the group symbol of God being a Father, warm, concerned and caring. The group has experienced or understands God as Father, not as an iceberg. Thus the group does not accept the "iceberg" symbol. It does not speak to them. They cannot recognize

themselves in it.

Tillich would say that this "iceberg" idea is not really a symbol, but a devised sign, created by the individual to aid his own personal understanding. It can only become a symbol for the individual if the community accepts it as such and recognizes itself in it.

Now if, perchance, the community somehow experienced God as cold and distant, then the iceberg idea would grow to become a symbol of how they see God in relation to themselves. Then they can accept the "iceberg" as a symbol.

(The relation of the community of people and the symbol will be much better defined when I come to discussing the importance of symbolism, especially as it relates to communication.)

To summarize this discussion as to what a symbol is, it might be worthwhile to use an example of a well-known symbol, the Christian symbol, the cross.

The cross is an object; its physical dimensions are very simple. It is basically two pieces of wood placed one across the other. In Biblical times it was a common means of execution used by the Romans for political or dangerous criminals. For Christians, this cross is more than a means of execution; it is a symbol of hope, of love and of forgiveness.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on a cross; He died for us, out of love and obedience, to show us what we

meant to God. But the meaning of the cross does not only lie in the fact that Jesus died but also in the fact that there was a resurrection on Easter morning. So death is not the thing which predominates in this picture but life, resurrection and hope prevail.

To understand and comprehend this whole happening, a symbol came into being. The cross became a symbol which represented this happening in the life of Jesus Christ and also what this happening means for us. When the cross is viewed, the individual viewing it does not only see a wooden cross, but grasps the whole transcendent idea of forgiveness and redemption, of death and resurrection. Thus the cross-symbol has something other than itself in view.

But it also conceptualizes what has and is happening. How does one describe resurrection except through the picture or symbol of the empty tomb or the empty cross?

Because of my awareness of the cross, and because the cross participates in the reality to which it points, I can participate in the reality to which the cross points. It aids me in grasping and appreciating what Jesus' death means and has done for me.

The cross is not my own personal symbol but it is for a total community; it is for the total group who call themselves Christian, who participate in the Christ event.

Let me re-emphasize one point. It must be clear that a symbol grows out of a happening. The cross would not have

become a symbol, representing and pointing to the Christ event, if Christ had not died on the cross. Or to restate an earlier example: "Black Tuesday" would not have become a word-symbol had not the stock market dropped on a certain Tuesday quite a few years ago.

..II: THE FUNCTION OF SYMBOLS

The symbol is a tool used in communication. It has specific characteristics. It is an object or word which is not important in itself. Its importance lies in the fact that it serves the function of representing and putting form and substance to an experience. It is also a community product; it is relevant as a tool if the community for which it is a symbol accepts it as such, that is, if it serves to aid that community in grasping some aspect of reality.

Having discussed the definition and the characteristics of a symbol, the next area to discuss is its function. By so doing a better understanding of the meaning and reasons for a symbol will be brought to light. To do this it is necessary to discuss at some length the why of symbols. Why are symbols and the use made of them so important for man? Why is the symbol important?

Much has been written on this area from many different points of view. This chapter will serve as a survey of these discussions. From my readings of these different discussions on the importance of symbolism, the following general introductory statements can be made.

It appears that there is a general concensus that symbols somehow open up new levels of reality; they aid man in going beyond where he is at present; they enable man to grow and mature. This is very much tied in with the whole area of man, the communicator.

Virginia Satir in her book, Conjoint Family Therapy, makes this statement: "People must communicate clearly if they are going to get the information which they need from others. Without communication we, as humans, would not be able to survive"²³.

This statement by Satir may mark the beginning of what "opening up new levels of reality" means. Man must communicate in order to remain human, in order to survive. His growth, his maturation, his discovery of himself as an individual are very much dependant on his ability to give and receive messages, on his ability to communicate.

Symbolism plays a very real part in man's ability and attempt to communicate. It is an essential fact that man cannot live without communication. Using this premise, we can also say that man cannot exist without using symbols. Man responds to symbols and communicates through them in his religious and social life. Without symbols he would be reduced to the state of an animal, for symbols open up new levels of reality. Symbols are the key to the "world of ideas and ideals" to use a Platonic analogy. In other words, they open up a truly human world in which only man can participate.

With this general introduction to the importance and function of symbolism, let us move into a discussion of the

²³Virginia Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy (California: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1967), p. 63.

contributions of different writers on this very subject. As we look at these different writers, the discussion on the "how" of opening up new levels of reality will be emphasized.

Mircea Eliade has done extensive work on symbolism. Early in his work, Images and Symbols, he states that "consequently the study of them (symbols) enables us to reach a better understanding of man"²⁴. Eliade goes on to say that "symbols are part and parcel of human existence"²⁵.

His discussion develops.

Symbolic thinking is not the exclusive privilege of the child, of the poet or of the unbalanced mind: it is consubstantial with human existence, it comes before language and discursive reason. The symbol reveals certain aspects of reality--the deepest aspects--which defy any other means of knowledge. Images, symbols and myths are not irresponsible creations of the psyche; they respond to a need and fulfil a function, that of bringing to light the most hidden modalities of being.²⁶

It appears that Eliade is speaking of symbols as part of man's search for the "real". But this "real", which is somehow part of man, is something which, in a sense, man has lost. He states that "every historic man carries on, within himself, a great deal of prehistoric humanity"²⁷. In a very real sense, Eliade speaks, in almost Platonic terms,

²⁴ Mircea Eliade, Images and Symbols (London: Harvill Press, 1961), p. 12.

²⁵ Ibid., 25.

²⁶ Ibid., 12.

²⁷ Ibid.

about a more beautiful and complete existence which man had enjoyed before the consequences of historical and possibly social development set in. This prehistoric existence is somehow imprinted in man's mind and is voiced or sought after via symbolic speaking and dreaming.

Eliade is speaking this way in the context of symbolism and psychoanalysis.

Dreams, walking dreams, the images of his nostalgias and of his enthusiasms, etc., are so many forces that may project the historically-conditioned being into a spiritual world that is infinitely richer than the closed world of his own "historic moment".²⁸

Through the dreams and images of nostalgias, etc., it appears that Eliade has zeroed in on what he means by reality. He believes that man is not only conditioned by his contemporary historical moment but is aware of other situations of conditioning.

Although it is true that ~~the~~ man is always found "in situation", his situation is not, for all that a historical one in the sense of being conditioned solely by the contemporaneous historical moment. The man in his totality is aware of other situations over and above his historical condition; for example, he knows the state of dreaming, or of the walking dream, or of melancholy, or of detachment, or of aesthetic bliss, or of escape, etc..... and none of these states is historical, although they are as authentic and as important for human existence as man's historical existence is.²⁹

The desires and needs of the conscience (or consciousness)

²⁸Ibid., 13.

²⁹Ibid., 32f.

is what Eliade appears to label "reality". According to him, "the more a consciousness is awakened, the more it transcends its own historicity"³⁰. Symbols and images serve the function of awakening this consciousness, of revealing more of the ultimate reality, of carrying man above his own historical framework.

Rollo May also deals with the values and needs for symbolism in terms of psychoanalysis. It might be wise to discuss his views here since Eliade spoke in the context of the dream, etc.

The element of the "prehistoric existence" in Eliade's presentation, which is expanded by May, is an important one when dealing with how the symbol is used. Generally speaking, it appears that there is some archaic or prehistoric element in the unconsciousness which is part of man's existence. This plays a vital part in the use he makes of symbols.

May states that "symbols bring together various unconscious urges and desires of both personal depth on one hand and an archaic, archetypal depth on the other"³¹.

To expand this idea another quotation is necessary. An individual's self-image is built up of symbols.

³⁰Ibid., 33.

³¹Rollo May, "The Significance of Symbols", Symbolism in Religion and Literature, ed. Rollo May (New York: George Braziller, 1960), p. 15.

Symbolizing is basic to such questions as personal identity. For the individual experiences himself as self in terms of symbols which arise from three levels at once; those from archaic and archetypal depths within himself, symbols arising from the personal events of his psychological and biological experience and the general symbols and values which he obtains in his culture.³²

What May appears to be saying is that man's existence and man's self-identity are comprised of three levels of influence. Man has to deal with his immediate, concrete situation. (Eliade might call this his contemporary historical moment.) This is where he lives and what is happening to him in his everyday existence, the decisions and problems which he has to cope with daily. Then there is the pressure placed upon him by culture. This pressure acts as guidelines giving direction and limits to what he should or should not do. May declares:

In every society there are certain formative principles which infuse every aspect of our culture --art, science, education, religion. These formative principles are expressed in certain basic symbols and myths which lend form and unity to the culture. Such symbols are the culture's form of transcending the immediate situation.³³

(By using the word, "transcending", May is not speaking of otherworldly or supernatural qualities. But he is saying that the cultural symbols influencing an individual point to some type of meaning and value which is not always realized in the immediate situation.)

³²Ibid., 22.

³³Ibid., 24.

The third level of influence on an individual is that of the archetypal type. In this dwells man's desires, wants, guilt, etc. This is one of the forces which creates a want in man, a desire to seek for something. One's awareness of these specific urges can vary depending on the point at which a person is, in terms of his awareness of himself; of who he is in relation to the world.

As was already stated, May is discussing the use of symbols from a psychological point of view. In it, he is concerned about how symbolism and the use of it affects and aids in the therapy of his patients.

In his discussion, he also speaks of the symbol as opening up new levels of reality; this reality in May's thinking is tied in very closely with man's growing awareness of himself. He states in a footnote that "symbols are the quintessential forms of man's expression and interpretation of himself and his experiences"³⁴. Symbols are essential and vital in man's attempt to see where he is, where he has been and where he is going.

May, in attempting to describe his interpretation of the importance of symbolism, discusses a particular patient and the recurring dream this individual had. I will not go into the full discussion he gives but will deal with the main features.

³⁴Ibid., 13.

May was treating a young lawyer who had come for treatment because of recurrent sexual impotence, embarrassing and uncontrolled blushing and various psychosomatic illnesses. During the therapy, the lawyer shared this dream fragment with May:

I was standing at the mouth of a cave, with one foot in and one out. The cave inside was dark, almost black. The floor in the center of the cave was a swampy bog, but it was firm on each side. I felt anxiety and a strong need to get out.³⁵

The cave in the dream was a symbol of the predicament this lawyer felt himself to be in. This dream came during a period when this man was attempting to work on his difficulty in making a date with a girl.

After much analysis and talking together, May gives this interpretation of the dream, especially the figure or symbol of the cave:

the cave is a womb and vagina symbol, a symbol which brought up before him the threat of being sucked into annihilation, absorbed by his own attachment to his mother. The dream pictures him as now standing in a dilemma, wanting and needing the protection and warmth of the mother (the kangaroo's pouch) but realizing that this not only blocks him from seeing reality (Plato's cave) but threatens to suck him like quicksand into a smothering death.³⁶

The symbol of the cave became for that man an interpretation of his predicament. It allowed him to put form and substance to the question, "What shall I do?".

³⁵Ibid., 14.

³⁶Ibid., 15.

The critical issue for May in dealing with the dream as a symbol was to be aware that "no symbol of which a patient dreams is ever completely 'unconscious'"³⁷.

According to May

The matrix out of which the dream is born is precisely the interrelation, often in struggle and conflict, between the conscious pole of the crisis of the day and the unconscious depths within the person.³⁸

Out of the matrix of conscious and unconscious the symbol is conceived, molded and born. The symbol is "mothered" by the archaic material in so-called unconscious depths, but "fathered" by the individual's conscious existence in his immediate struggles.³⁹

Another important aspect of the what of a symbol is the aspect dealing with the necessity of movement when confronted by a symbol. This for May is one of the basic functions of a true symbol. "In its full form the symbol presents an existential situation in which the patient is asking himself the question, in what direction shall I move?"⁴⁰ The symbol, thus, is seen as presenting a situation or a picture in which some decision toward movement is called for. This May calls the "conative element" of the symbol. He feels that if you genuinely experience a symbol, some movement, some stand on the part of the person confronted is necessary; in fact he feels that movement will automatically

³⁷Ibid., 18.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 19.

⁴⁰Ibid., 16.

take place. To explain this idea further, May in a footnote states that "it is true certainly of such classical symbols as the Christian Cross; like it or not, if you genuinely experience it, you must take a stand with regard to it"⁴¹.

In connection with this call to movement on the part of a genuine symbol, May sees the symbol as having a healing effect.

The healing power of the symbol has two aspects. This power resides, on one hand, in the fact that the symbol elicits and brings into awareness the repressed, unconscious, archaic urges, longings, dreads and other psychic content. This is the regressive function of the symbol. But on the other hand, the symbol reveals new goals, new ethical insights and possibilities; they are a breaking through of greater meaning which was not present before.... This we call the progressive function of the symbol.⁴²

Thus in psychoanalysis, May feels the symbol has a very important role to play. Basically, it aids individuals in this search for self-identity, for what is real. It grows out of the matrix of the person's existence and somehow provides the answer to the questions: What shall I do? Where am I? Because it answers these questions it, if genuine, causes the person to move in the direction of self-fulfillment and thus serves a very beneficial, healing function. For May "symbols are a means of discovery"⁴³.

They are a progressive revealing of structure in

⁴¹Ibid., 17.

⁴²Ibid., 45.

⁴³Ibid.

our relation to nature and to our own existence, a revealing of new ethical forms. Symbols thus are educative....e--ducatio...and by drawing out inner reality they enable the person to experience greater reality in the outside world as well.⁴⁴

Both Eliade and May made the suggestion that the realization of the importance of symbolism is again rising, that people in the know are taking the study of symbolism more seriously and conscientiously in their work, especially in psychoanalysis.

In Significant Issues for the 1970's, edited by Edward Uthe, the importance of and the need for symbols are dealt with. This document is speaking in terms of a Task Group's findings with respect to significant issues which the Lutheran Church in America will most likely meet and face in the 1970's, one of which is the communication of the Christian faith. Thus, it works more with the religious symbol, pressing two points, namely: communication requires the use of symbols, and the need for change necessitates a reinterpretation of symbols. In this discussion of this document's ideas, some of Tillich's thinking will appear for it makes much of Tillich's reasoning and conclusions. In discussing this document, it is hoped that some of the thoughts concerning the why of the symbol (which have already been presented) will be clarified and augmented.

Speaking about the need or responsibility of Christians to witness, this statement is made:

⁴⁴Ibid.

Witness to the infinite is always made through the finite, through human beings who by word and deed convey the gospel to other human beings. This communication requires the use of symbols: actions spoken or written language, created objects.⁴⁵

It goes on to say that this communication of the infinite, of God and Christian concepts, is a vital piece of communication. Because symbols are necessary to this type of communication, it is also vital that the symbols speak to and have meaning for the person who is listening. It goes on to say that "the community of faith has a responsibility to express its faith in forms which have a point of contact with the experience of contemporary man"⁴⁶.

It is essential that some consideration be given to the listener in communication. If man is to grow and develop in his awareness of himself and his community or his society, he must do this in relation to and in conjunction with those around him. As Virginia Satir stated: "man cannot survive without communication"⁴⁷.

The document augments this point by saying that communication is a vital part of man's growth and awareness. Also it is vital that the methods used in communicating, and this pertains to the symbol as well, be relevant and meaningful ones.

⁴⁵Edward W. Uthe, ed. Significant Issues for the 1970's (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 22.

⁴⁶Ibid., 23.

⁴⁷Satir, loc. cit.

Any person or institution seeking to convey concepts and convictions must use symbols which stimulate the sensory organs and thought processes of those who are addressed. The use of symbols, whether words or pictures, presupposes a high degree of commonality of experience between the persons involved, for a symbol is an abstraction of experience.⁴⁸

Tillich's discussion of the fourth characteristic of the symbol, "its perceptibility as such", has some relevance here. To recall it briefly, Tillich made the point that the becoming of a symbol and the acceptance of it as such by a community or society belong together; they are inseparable.

Thus it seems, when combining Tillich's thoughts with the points raised by the document, we see that a symbol grows from within a communal experience. In discussing Tillich's fourth characteristic I used the example of the symbol of God the Father and God the iceberg. In this I attempted to make the point that the symbol of an iceberg pointing to one of the characteristics of God was an individualistic, personal symbol and not one in which the community found itself.

In this "iceberg" symbol, the problem of communicating is great because of the fact that the individual using this word-symbol has not recognized the fact that the group to whom he is speaking has not experienced such a God. The document would expand this and say that maybe the people on

⁴⁸Uthe, loc. cit., p. 30.

whom we use our traditional Christian symbols in attempting to communicate Christian concepts are in the same predicament. Maybe the traditional symbols are not relevant, not speaking to or growing from the group's contemporary situation. It would go so far as to say:

Too much communication in the church at present is limited to verbalization and second-hand experience. Dependence on such approaches may partially account for the church's frustrating inability to arouse a widespread sense of social awareness and responsibility among its constituents.⁴⁹

Why are symbols important? They are important because they are a vital part of communication, communication through which human beings are able to mature and grow in their awareness of their humanness. But in order for a symbol, as a part of communication, to be useful, it must be relevant. It must "stimulate the sensory organs and thought processes of those who are addressed"⁵⁰.

This awareness of the listener is an important aspect of our discussion of the symbol.

The document also discusses the fact that symbols open up new levels of reality. It believes that the church's communication must be a communication of its experiences; these experiences are, in a sense, what the document means by reality. God is at the centre of the church's experiences; this is the reality to which religious symbolism points.

⁴⁹Ibid., 53.

⁵⁰Ibid., 30.

Tillich pointed out that in every thought system there must first be the material out of which the thoughts develop. There must be a given something which is conceptualized by the thought.⁵¹

From this material the symbol grows and develops. Because it develops out of experiencing this material, this God, it thus points to that experience or that reality. Because the symbol functions this way, it enables man to grasp the reality he is experiencing.

A symbol evokes more than it clearly represents because it speaks not only to the senses, the abstract intelligence, but to the entire human psyche. Because it works on the imagination, the will and the emotions, it elicits a response from the whole man. Symbols, therefore, have the power which purely conventional signs or conceptual signs lack. Symbols are of fundamental importance for the integration of the personality, for the cohesion of society, and for the corporate life of religious groups.⁵²

Thus symbols appear to have an organizing as well as an incentive-to-take-a-stand quality. They grow out of an experience and by pointing to and participating in a reality they somehow provide a handle by which the individual or a group can grab hold of this reality and participate in it.

The idea that the symbol evolves from an experience is a vital one. The document makes this comment, probably based on Tillich's thinking:

The substance of religious symbols is derived from every realm of experience---natural, personal, social, historical. In themselves these realms and experiences have limited meaning and importance,

⁵¹Ibid., 31.

⁵²Ibid., 32.

but they are used to point beyond themselves to that which is unconditional, unlimited, infinite in meaning, and of crucial importance.⁵³

To expand upon this vital idea, a discussion of Tillich's thoughts in Theology of Culture is necessary. For this idea of the symbol evolving out of an experience, yet growing to the point of helping an individual participate in experiencing a reality is crucial in discussing the importance of symbolism.

Eliade stated that "the more a consciousness is awakened, the more it transcends its own historicity"⁵⁴. May speaks about the "transcending" quality of the cultural symbols, its formative principle. Tillich, in speaking about language, declares that "language is the expression of man's freedom from the given situation and its concrete demands"⁵⁵. Symbols are a real part of language.

The idea which each of these three writers is postulating is that man has the need to expand his mind, to expand and develop his concepts and realizations. In a psychological framework, May would see the dream-symbol as a means of aiding the patient in expanding the growing in his awareness of himself and the society in which he lives. Here the symbol serves a therapeutic or healing function. Eliade sees the re-recognizing of the importance of symbolism and

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Eliade, loc. cit., p. 33.

⁵⁵Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 47.

myth as the major fact in man's progress in developing more meaningful understandings of himself. Tillich puts much emphasis on the ability and the power of the symbol on opening up new levels of reality, on becoming more aware and more conscious of the Ultimate, "the ground of being".

Some of what will be discussed in the following paragraphs will be repetitious but repetition is necessary in order to pursue this idea of the growth and importance of symbolism.

In speaking about the symbol, Tillich speaks of it in terms of functions.

The first function of the symbol, as Tillich sees it, is its representative function. The symbol points to something beyond itself. Not only that, it participates in the reality of that to which it points. This has already been covered, so no more needs to be said concerning it.

The second function of the symbol is that it opens up new levels of reality. Tillich compares this function with the function of art. In order for the symbol and/or art to open up new levels of reality something else must happen.

Something else must be opened up---namely, levels of the soul, levels of our interior reality. And they must correspond to the levels of an exterior reality which are opened up by the soul. So every symbol is two-edged. It opens up reality and it opens up the soul.⁵⁶

⁵⁶Ibid., 57.

To explain the relationship of the two things the symbol must open up, the question on how the symbol arises must be dealt with. Tillich declares that:

Out of the womb which is usually called today the "group consciousness" or "collective unconscious", or whatever you want to call it--out of a group which acknowledges, in this thing, this word, this flag, or whatever it may be, its own being. It is not invented intentionally; and even if somebody would try to invent a symbol, as something happens, then it becomes a symbol only if the unconscious of a group says "yes" to it.⁵⁷

The self, with its ideas, thoughts, questions meets the experience provided for him by the society. These two aspects are important. The symbol, in opening up some reality, must also speak to and arouse an individual's or a group's unconscious selfhood. Again this ties back to Tillich's discussion on the symbol's "acceptibility as such". Thus the symbol not only presents a new way of looking at something but also arouses in man the awareness of himself and his own needs and desires, his own search for selfhood.

The third consideration or statement postulated by Tillich is that the symbol will die if it ceases to function in opening up new levels of reality in this two-pronged way (exterior and interior reality). For symbols are born out of a relationship, out of an encounter. "If new symbols are born, they are born out of a changed relationship to the ultimate ground of being, that is, to the Holy."⁵⁸ If

⁵⁷Ibid., 58.

⁵⁸Ibid., 59.

a particular symbol fails to serve its function, if it fails to carry an individual or a community, then it is irrelevant and dies. It becomes a fossil which points to something which happened in the past, but something which is not recognizable anymore, something which has no relevance for today.

Stowe in his book, Communicating Reality Through Symbols, has postulated some very interesting and vital pieces of information. A discussion of his thoughts can serve as a summation of the ideas pursued so far in this chapter.

Stowe also pursues the point that symbols aid man in grasping and participating in some type of reality. Very early in his arguments he makes the statement that "in man's search for what is real he has to recourse to symbols"⁵⁹.

Stowe, who uses a great deal of Ernst Cassirer's thoughts, quotes Cassirer as saying:

Man has, as it were, discovered a new method of adapting himself to his environment. Between the receptor system and the effector system, which are to be found in all animal species, we find in man a third link which we may describe as the symbolic system. This new acquisition transforms the whole of human life as compared with the other animals. Man lives not merely in a broader reality; he lives, so to speak, in a new dimension of reality.⁶⁰

Adding to this comment of Cassirer's, Stowe states that "the key fact for this insight is that human response to existence is constructive, not passive. Seeing is translating, rather

⁵⁹Stowe, loc. cit., p. 9.

⁶⁰Ibid., 15.

than seeing is believing"⁶¹.

Generally speaking then, Stowe says that symbols are a part of what it is to be a human being. Being a human almost necessitates the need to search for or to pursue some type of better understanding or better realization of oneself in relation to one's world and one's God.

The phrase "seeing is translating" indicates that man makes an effort to conceptualize or to put a handle on the things he experiences, the happenings he meets. "Symbols come into being at the boundary where the self, with its power of knowing, of intuition, meets the world."⁶²

Man is in constant dialogue with his situation in one way or another; this dialogue may be healthy or it may be sick.

To go back a bit, it is noticed that this "dialogue" angle is present in every writer who has been discussed so far.

Eliade spoke of the relationship between the "contemporary historical situation" and "consciousness of an individual". These two things which had to be taken into consideration in studying the symbol and its importance suggests this dialogue.

May, especially in using the example of the young lawyer's dream, exemplified this same "dialogue" feature of

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 18.

man. He has man dealing with three different levels in his existence; the archaic, archetypal depths within himself; his own personal everyday experiences; and the "formative principles" found in society.

Tillich speaks of "interior" and "exterior" reality and that these must be understood and dealt with in our understanding of the working of the symbol.

In all these comments and discussions it appears that the symbol is tied in very closely with man's search for the "real", for himself, for better understanding of his situation.

Man in "meeting the world" discovers that symbols arise from this meeting. Not only do symbols arise from this meeting but these very same symbols aid that person in participating in and grasping the experience, the reality of which he has caught a glimpse.

Stowe quotes a very powerful statement of Cassirer in this respect. "It is symbolic thought which overcomes the natural inertia of man and endows him with a new ability, the ability constantly to reshape his human universe."⁶³

In his chapter on "Communication and Communion", Stowe touches upon the basic function and importance of the symbol. He opens his discussion here by commenting on the fact that human beings and human civilization are very much dependent on many systems or methods of communication. He states:

⁶³Ibid., 23.

In this 20th century, are there authentic symbols that provide for genuine communication between men and with ultimate reality? It seems clear that many of the old symbols are dead. But symbolic power will exist as long as the spirit of man searches for genuine values, for authentic selfhood, for images of reality.⁶⁴

This "search for genuine values", etc., again touches on the aspect of dialogue, of encounter. As man encounters man, as he encounters his given situation, as he encounters his God, he will be compelled to make use of symbols. Not only that but out of this encounter will the symbol grow, will it be born.

If there is to be religious communication to modern man, (or any type of communication for that matter), it will not be by means of attempting to impose a framework of thought no longer possible for him. Nor will it come by dressing up liturgies with more elaborate forms. For authentic religious symbols (and even non-religious symbols) must come from man's encounter with the ultimate. They must be generated from the living awareness that God is not a symbol but the ground of All Being. Symbols are born of living encounter; they die when that living encounter is no more, and what is left is a fossil.⁶⁵

The important point which arises from the preceding quotation is that a symbol is born from an encounter. Because it arises from an encounter, it also provides a vital link between the individual and the reality he encounters. Stowe quotes Karl Jasper as saying:

One of man's supreme achievements is the genuine communication from person to person, when from out of this historical situation in their search for

⁶⁴Ibid., 37.

⁶⁵Ibid., 39.

the ultimate meaning of existence the Transcendent breaks through, revealing to each the authenticity of his Selfhood and their common ground in the Encompassing.⁶⁶

Could this be what revelation is all about? Tillich states that the symbol cannot be constructed, but that it is born; it is revealed in the encounter.

There is a term with unique fitness from certain religious symbols. The term "sign-event" as used by Paul Tillich to refer to concrete historical happenings that are held to have revelatory significance as expressive of the nature and purpose of God.⁶⁷

A symbol is a visible or audible sign or emblem of some thought, emotion or experience, interpreting what can be really grasped only by the mind and imagination by something which enters into the field of observation.⁶⁸

The area which seems to have the greatest importance when discussing symbolic usage is the area of opening up new levels of reality. This I feel deals basically with man the communicator, attempting to search for himself, attempting to find relevancy in the society in which he lives and among the people with whom he associates. In order for man to communicate himself and his ideas and experiences to others, he must have the means by which to do this. One of these means is the symbol. The symbol grows out of the experience a man has or the questioning he does. As it grows out of this situation, it becomes an entity in itself and serves to aid

⁶⁶Ibid., 40.

⁶⁷Ibid., 91.

⁶⁸Ibid., 92.

man in understanding better that which he experiences.

In this discussion the fact that man is part of a community is essential. For it is in this community that man is able to share and search with man. Through this searching together the ability to communicate, to talk to one another, develops, resulting in the growth and development of man.

III: SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR

In the two previous chapters, the symbol, its characteristics and its functions have been discussed. The symbol is one important tool used in communication. It is one vital means of communication available to man today.

A symbol can be an effective and beneficial method if it fulfils certain requirements. It can become demonic if it doesn't. These requirements are equated to some of the characteristics that an effective communicator has. By discussing the symbol some of these characteristics have been revealed. In setting forth these characteristics two things will be accomplished. The statement concerning the symbol's beneficial or demonic quality will be expanded and the characteristics of an effective communicator will be available.

From our study of the symbol certain basic characteristics of an effective communicator can be postulated.

1. Because we are dealing with the fact that people need communication for survival and for growth, the first basic characteristic of a method is that it takes this person or these people into consideration. People have certain needs; they are moving in a specific area of concern; they are searching for meaning. They live in a rural area or in a suburb. They are apathetic or genuinely concerned. They are many things. An effective means of communication must take this aspect seriously.

2. The second characteristic is tied in with the phrase "opening up new levels of reality". An effective communicator must aid man to grow in his awareness of himself. It must provide a means by which man's feelings and ideas can be dealt with. In essence, it must aid man in becoming human. Thus, an effective communicator is a tool which man can use to open doors for himself.

3. The communicator must be relevant. This is essential to everything. If it is not relevant and meaningful it can become stifling and deadly; it can close doors and frustrate man's search for the real. Thus an effective communicator cannot be something which is imposed upon a person or a community; it must grow out of that setting in which man finds himself. The tool used by people to aid their communication and thus their search will be most beneficial if it arises out of the search itself. It must arise out of some type of genuine interaction.

4. Growing out of an interaction between people, the effective communicator must also allow room for dialogue. An effective communicator which takes the listener into account, provides for the listener an opportunity to respond and thus to grow.

5. Thus if dialogue is essential and the listener's response is necessary, the effective communicator must provide an avenue for movement, must open up doors. It must also serve to organize different things, different feelings and

happenings; this serves to aid the individual or community in wading through the complexities of life and make some sense of the many things of different value that are going on at one time.

In studying the symbol as a means of communication, some characteristics of an effective communicator have come to light. We move now to a study of the New Testament parable as a symbol in an attempt to augment and fill out some of the characteristics of an effective communicator. The study of the parable as a symbol will provide a setting in which some of these characteristics can be seen in action.

SECTION II ,

SYMBOLIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARABLE

IV: THE PARABLE: DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

In this section of the thesis it is my intention to discuss the New Testament parable as symbol in order to illuminate the ideas brought out in the last chapter concerning some of the characteristics of an effective communicator. This intention will necessitate a number of things: defining a parable, bringing to light its symbolic characteristics or qualities, and pointing out some of the characteristics of the parable as a communicator.

In this chapter the emphasis will be on defining the parable and pointing out some of its characteristics and functions.

The first basic question which must be dealt with is this: Why emphasize the New Testament parable over against other means of communication? Why not use some other means of communication instead?

The reasons for using the New Testament parable are as follows: First, a very basic reason is that it is a well-known means of communication. The Synoptic Gospels are filled with these parables. Connected with this initial reason is that this means of communication grew out of a situation in which human beings were interacting. Jesus, in his discussions with various groups of people, used the parable extensively. When a question was asked or when he was occupying himself teaching the multitudes, he relied heavily on the parable to make his point. Out of the matrix of human interaction and within this matrix the parable grew

and was used. This idea is important in a discussion of the characteristics of an effective communicator.

Secondly, and of greater importance is the matter of symbolism as it pertains to communication. In an attempt to illustrate the characteristics of an effective communicator in the light of the discussion on the symbol, it is necessary to use an example of a means of communication which makes use of symbolism to some degree. The New Testament parable does this. The parable is a picture-symbol. It does not present itself in the form of a drawing, but the "story-telling" aspect of it presents to the listener quite a vivid picture of a situation. Examples of this are numerous: the story of the Good Samaritan bandaging the wounds of the traveller who was beaten and robbed; the return of the Prodigal Son when his father ran out to meet him; the vineyard owner paying all his workers the same wage regardless of when they started to work that particular day. All these incidents present a picture, a situation in the mind of the listener.

Also, this means of communication grows out of a situation. Jesus' parables were initiated by a question, by an argument, or by the multitude desiring to hear what Jesus had to say on a given subject. By reacting to these situations, Jesus by using the parable placed before the listener the situation, or more specifically, an interpretation of a situation. By so commenting, the parable provides the listener with the opportunity to see the situation a bit

clearer. It enables them to grasp what is going on. It may even help them to make some movement or take a stand because of it.

This leads to another reason why I chose the parable as the method of communication with which to work. The parable sets before the recipient of the message the opportunity to make a decision. In this way it may serve to grant a person a little better insight into his own particular situation as it relates to his society or to his God: into a new level of reality.

Also this means of communication is dealing with experiences which in many cases are best, or are only describable and discussable through the usage of symbols: the symbols serve to conceptualize these experiences.

Before proceeding much further into an examination of the parable as symbol in relation to some of the characteristics of an effective communication, it might be beneficial to state what this genre is.

What is a parable? There are many definitions given for this means of communication. Some definitions are very terse; others are much more explanatory.

A general definition of what a parable is is given in the Americana Encyclopaedia. This definition does not define specifically the New Testament parable but provides us with a general introductory statement. It states that a parable is:

a fictitious narrative, usually brief, intended to illustrate some point in moral or religious teaching. As used by the ancient Greeks, it means any literary illustration. The parable is, therefore, of the class of fictitious narratives of which the simile, myth, fable, and allegory are other examples. In the Bible, the parable is quite frequently used to illustrate the teacher's meaning. The descriptions in the Biblical parable keep well within the limits of natural probability; the parable always has for object some spiritual motive with a scope limited to inculcating a single lesson.⁶⁹

To expand upon this definition and bring us closer to a definition of the New Testament parable, it would be beneficial to look into A. M. Hunter's discussion.

What is a parable: In Sunday School we were taught to define it as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning". For those starting Bible study this can hardly be bettered; but it is not precise enough for the pundits. If we wish to please them we had better define it as a comparison drawn from nature or daily life and designed to illuminate some spiritual truth, on the assumption that what is valid in one sphere is valid also in the other.⁷⁰

Hunter continues this discussion by declaring that:

Parable is a form of teaching. "Almost all teaching", Dean Inge has said, "consists in comparing the unknown with the known, the strange with the familiar".⁷¹

The word "parable" has a Greek derivation. It is derived from the Greek word, *παροιμία*, which means or indicates a comparison or an analogy.

⁶⁹"Parable", Encyclopedia Americana, 1962 ed., Vol. XXI.

⁷⁰A. M. Hunter, Interpreting the Parables (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 8.

⁷¹Ibid.

To expand this discussion on the word derivation, Hunter in defining the parable goes into this area. He speaks about the origin of the parable and states that it grows from the Old Testament literature. "But the antecedents of Christ's parables must be sought not in Hellas but in Israel; not in the Greek orators but in the Old Testament prophets and the Jewish Fathers."⁷²

Hunter goes on to say that "in germ, a parable is a figurative saying"⁷³. This goes back to the understanding of the Hebrew word, mashal, which is derived from the verb meaning to "be like". The Hebrew word, mashal, was used for a wide range of communication methods: from the figurative saying to the proverb; from a proper parable to an allegory.

But the New Testament parable, even though it grows from the Hebrew understanding of the word, mashal, does not carry all these features. It differs from the similitude (or figurative saying), "the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed", in that the picture-symbol parable (the story parable) describes a situation in which man is directly involved.

Nor is the parable equated to an allegory. Hunter notes the difference in this way:

A parable usually has only one tertium; an allegory may have a dozen. In other words, the allegory is a kind of "description in code", and, if it is to be fully understood, it must be deciphered point by point, feature by feature. On the other hand, in

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., 9.

the parable, there is one chief point of likeness between the story and the meaning, and the details simply help to make the story realistic and so serve the central thrust of the parable.⁷⁴

In extending this discussion of the difference between an allegory and a parable, Hunter goes on to make a very important point concerning the parable. He says that "the true parable, if it is to fulfil its purpose, must be life-like, it must hold the mirror up to life"⁷⁵.

Already a few characteristics of the parable as a communicator have arisen. These have to do with the function of the parable, what it is out to do. From the definition set forth in the Americana Encyclopedia, we discover that the parable is used to "illustrate the teacher's meaning". From Hunter's, we note that the parable serves to "illuminate some spiritual truth". The function of the parable as communicator is indicated by these two verbs, "to illustrate" and "to illuminate". Another way of saying this is that the parable as a means of communication serves to clarify some aspect of existence; it attempts to shed light on what is happening. Generally speaking, what Jesus in his ministry was attempting to do was to open up for his listeners a new awareness of God's loving relationship to them and of their relationship to one another. The parable, the picture-symbol, was a tool by which the listener might be able to grasp this new awareness, this new reality.

⁷⁴Ibid., 10.

⁷⁵Ibid.

From the definition of a parable it is necessary to lay a bit more groundwork. It is necessary to deal with some of its outstanding features before discussing the parable's characteristics as an effective communicator.

Geraint Jones lists some of the characteristics he sees the parable as having. All these characteristics point to the fact that the parable is to illuminate and not to add to a point of concern or a point of understanding.

Jones has the following list of twelve characteristics:

1. There is economy, only necessary persons appear. For example, in the Prodigal Son, there is no mother.
2. There is no parallel action; there are only successive moments.
3. The characters are simply sketched, usually with one trait. Five virgins are wise, five are foolish. These characters are usually characterized directly in speech or action and in relationship one with another.
4. Feelings and motives are seldom given; if given, then only when they are essential.
5. Motivation is lacking; eg. the younger son in the Prodigal Son gives no reason for leaving home.
6. Secondary persons are introduced only when absolutely necessary.
7. The end is lacking where it is taken for granted. We do not know what happens to the Rich Fool or the Fraudulent Servant, for the sequel doesn't matter once the point has been made.
8. Events and dealings are only suggested. We do not know how the Steward wasted his master's goods.
9. There is direct speech but no indirect argument.
10. The law of repetition is exemplified.
11. The most important items occur last, eg. the Sower, the Pharisee and the Publican.
12. The judgement of the listener is often invited. Judgement is not pronounced by the speaker but is implied in the content.⁷⁶

⁷⁶G. V. Jones, The Art and Truth of the Parables (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), p. 44f.

It might be well at this point to discuss one of Jesus' parables in the light of the characteristics just given. One famous parable is the parable of the Sower.

A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun arose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.⁷⁷

In this parable there is economy; only the sower appears in the picture. The character of the sower is not even sketched for that is not important to the story. What he is doing is of importance: that of sowing seeds. Even though his action is important there is no motivation given for the sowing; this in a sense is taken for granted: a sower's job is to sow seeds at the specified time in the growing season. No secondary characters are introduced because they are not required in this setting. How the seeds managed to fall on different soils is not discussed, for that is taken for granted considering the method used in sowing. In a sense, the judgment or opinion of the listener is asked for. Basically the question the listener has to ask is "What kind of soil am I?"⁷⁸

⁷⁷Matthew 13: 2-8. R.S.V.

⁷⁸J. Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), p. 77f. Jeremias in dealing with this parable discusses it from the point of view which deals with the harvest. The question I postulated concerning the type of soil a person is is the traditional interpretation;

The traditional interpretation given to this parable is this: the sower is equated to Jesus who is spreading the gospel (the sowing of the seeds) among the people with whom he comes in contact (the different soils). The reactions to this word are varied exemplified by the different responses of the seed in and on the various soils.

The parable, then, presents a picture, a situation to which the listener is compelled to respond.

Just as essential, if not more so, is the situation within which we find Jesus on or about the time of this parable.

Ernst Fuchs in his introduction to Eta Linnemann's book, Parables of Jesus, made this statement: "Every genuine parable is spoken from a community and for a community"⁷⁹. It is important to note that this parable of the Sower and the Seeds, or any other parable for that matter, did not grow in isolation. One of the reasons why the parable was effective was the fact that it grew out of a situation.

According to Matthew's gospel, Jesus was met by a great crowd, so he got into a boat and taught them. Mark's account of this same parable (Mark 4:1ff. R.S.V.) is very similar. Luke's account (Luke 8: 1ff.) also indicates the gathering of a large group of people before Jesus. The fact that a large

this interpretation I prefer. This does not discount Jeremias' view but for what I am doing the traditional interpretation is preferable.

⁷⁹Ernst Fuchs, "Introduction", Parables of Jesus, Eta Linnemann (London: S.P.C.K., 1966), p. xi.

group gathered around Jesus indicates that they had heard him before, that his teaching ministry was already in progress.

Then, why this particular parable at this time? The reasons for this may be many and varied. If one emphasizes the harvest-received factor, one could go along with Hunter's idea when he states that "the parable carries a ringing assurance for faint-hearted disciples"⁸⁰. (J. Jeremias also favours this interpretation.) But if we pursue the point that the parable is directed to the listener, with the listener in mind, seeking some sort of reaction, some sort of decision from him, then the basic question: "What kind of soil am I?", is the essential motive for this parable.

In a sense both reasons for the telling of this parable can be accepted, but I favour the latter one. With the accepting of the latter reason for the parable, then it must be stated that Jesus was attempting to help the people see and understand what he was about; he was attempting to help them search themselves in order to see what type of receptors they were of his teaching. In other words, he was providing for them a means by which they could grow.

As I speak about the reason for this parable in this way, I cannot help but think of Rollo May with his discussion of his young lawyer patient and of how the dream fragment opened up the door through which the young man could see and toward which he could make a decision to move. The dream of

⁸⁰ Hunter, loc. cit., p. 47.

the cave provided the question in a clear light; it also indicated an answer.

The parable of the Sower and the Seeds performs a similar function for the listeners of Jesus. It poses the question: "What kind of soil are you?"; it also indicates an answer. The choice is then up to the listener to move in whatever direction he desires. The fruitful move is there for him to accept and follow.

To summarize briefly, the parable is a means of communication which serves a clarifying function. Its characteristics are such that they aid this clarification role. (Note Jones' list of twelve.) As a means of communication it develops because of relationships and interactions, not in spite of them. The parable develops not in isolation but from a community.

The parable has been defined; its characteristics have been given. A few of its functions have been touched upon. As we move into the next chapter dealing with the parable as symbol, the function-aspect of the parable will be expanded.

V: THE PARABLE AS SYMBOL

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the parable as symbol. The parable is a symbol and uses symbolic imagery. This statement will be worked on and in the process it will be revealed how this aspect of the parable assists its communicative ability. Also in revealing the parable as symbol, the ideas brought forth in the first section concerning the characteristics of an effective communicator will be augmented.

To assist our discussion of the parable as symbol, use will be made of the political cartoon. Many other methods of communication from commercials to short stories and novels could be used to serve the same function. But I have decided to use the political cartoon to illustrate some of the aspects which will arise concerning the parable's symbolic characteristics. Its use may also shed more light on some of the characteristics of an effective communicator.

In the Interpreter's Bible in an article on the parable the following statement was made. This statement will set the germ idea for the arguments in favour of the parable's symbolic character.

For the parables have an arresting quality which has etched them deep in memory. They are based on things seen, and they awake immediate and vivid images which are seen again in the mind. It is because they enter through the visual imagination that the parables have penetrated so surely into the thought and conscience of immediate folk. Into the thought and also into the conscience, be it noted, for the parables provoke far more than curiosity. They not only arrest attention; they arouse something deep within. It was said that the common people heard him gladly;

and no wonder for the extraordinary quality of his teachings, and especially of his parables, was that they said what ordinary men and women could take hold on. When Jesus spoke, it was not as though some unfamiliar idea was coming from outside, but rather as though an instinctive recognition were being awakened in the listeners' own selves. "That is the way life really works", they said. "That is how truth is." The parables did not bring alien information; rather they focused and called into action what people already half-knew was so, and now suddenly could fully see.⁸¹

Note again some of the basic characteristics growing out of the section on the symbol. The symbol grows out of an experience, out of a situation in which man is involved. ("They are based on things seen. It was not as though some unfamiliar thing was coming from outside.") The symbol serves to open up new levels of reality, new awarenesses as to where man is and as to what his understanding of the situation is. ("Rather they focused and called into action what the people already half-knew was so; and now suddenly could fully see.") The symbol is a symbol because the community recognizes it as such because they recognize themselves in it. ("As though an instinctive recognition was being awakened in the listeners' own selves." "That is the way life really works." "That is how truth is.") Tillich argues that the symbol speaks to and evokes the actions of the total person. ("The parables have penetrated into the thought and conscience of immediate folk.") The symbol evokes a desire or a need to take a stand. ("They said what ordinary

⁸¹W. R. Bowie, "The Parables", Interpreter's Bible, ed. G. A. Buttrick, VII (1951), 165.

people could take hold on.")

This understanding of the parable and its function points quite definitely to its symbolic character. This comparison also indicates to some degree that the parable as symbol does contain some of the basic characteristics of an effective communicator.

Eta Linnemann feels this way about the character and function of the parable.

The parable is used to induce the listener to make a decision after the mind of the narrator in a concrete, historical situation....This situation is characterized by the greatest conceivable opposition which exists between the assessment of the situation by the narrator and the listener. The narrator who has at his disposal nothing other than the power of language is able to prevail upon the listener, because through the parable he offers them a new understanding of the situation.⁸²

This definition could fit very well as a definition of a symbol. The functions performed by the two are the same. To augment these ideas let us look at a parable in the light of these previous definitions.

One very well-known parable is that of the Prodigal Son.

There was a man who had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of property that falls to me". And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his money in loose living and when he had spent everything a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in

⁸²Eta Linnemann, Parables of Jesus (London: S.P.C.K., 1966), p. 21.

want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of the country, who sent him into the fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will rise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants'." And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet a distance, his father saw him and ran and embraced him, and kissed him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son". But the father said to his servants, "Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead and is alive; he was lost and is found". And they began to make merry.⁸³

If the parable itself (not looking at particular details within the parable, such as who does the father represent) is a symbol, it must do a number of things. It must grow out of a situation; it must reveal a new reality, a new insight; it must be recognizable as something with which the listener can identify; it must aid the listener in making some type of decision. The parable of the Prodigal Son fulfils these standards.

The situation from which this story grows is found in Luke 15: 1-2.

Now the tax-collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."⁸⁴

⁸³Luke 15: 11-24. R.S.V.

⁸⁴Luke 15: 1-2. R.S.V.

This type of situation was not new for Jesus. His ministry was essentially based on working with "sinners". He was always involved in one way or another with the "underdog", those who were rejected by the elite of their society. So the phrase, "this man receives sinners and eats with them", would be descriptive of Jesus' work. This fact was familiar to every person who knew or knew of Jesus. Thus a parable dealing with the why of his actions would not be out of line; it would not be a foreign argument for his listeners, Pharisees as well as others. In a very real sense, then, this parable grew out of a situation, a situation where the speaker, Jesus, was involved with people. It grew out of an action that Jesus had already performed and was in the process of performing.

This leads into a second facet of a symbol concerning the listener's identification with what was being presented. In other words, Jesus was not speaking about something which was totally irrelevant. He spoke out of the framework of his actions. He was not sitting in some ivory tower postulating nice little rules of thumb concerning a person's conduct toward his fellowman.

The other two aspects of this parable as symbol must be discussed as we search the particulars of this parable. The second facet concerning the listener's ease at identification and recognition will also be involved in this discussion.

To discuss the idea that this parable opens up new levels of reality, new insights, let us take a look at the

father in this parable and put some emphasis on his actions. Many of the things the father did at the beginning of the parable would not be strange to the listener; he could easily recognize the father's actions. These would include the way the inheritance was set up; the older son received the majority of the inheritance, that is, the land and cattle, etc. The younger son would receive a monetary inheritance which could be asked for at any time. So it was not unusual for the father to give over to the younger son his inheritance.

So far the story is credible and possible. The new or the anti-climax would come when Jesus started talking about the father's reactions to the son's return. It is quite probable that the normal reaction of the listener, based on the understanding of the father's role, would be very similar to that of the eldest son in the parable.

Now the eldest son was in the field and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, "Your brother has come and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound". But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, "Lo, these many years I have served you; yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!".⁸⁵

But this father acted contrary to expected behaviour. He ran (an action which was beneath the dignity of an ancient oriental) to meet his son. He fell upon his son's neck forbidding

⁸⁵ Luke 15: 25-30. R.S.V.

his son to fall on his knees, begging forgiveness and showing humility. He kissed his son on the cheek, a symbol of equality, whereas a servant only kissed the feet or the hand of his master. This required the bending of the knee to indicate humility.

Probably for the father to grant his son the wish of becoming a servant in his father's house would have been acceptable to the listener. But the father goes beyond the listener's expectations.

Not only does the father welcome the son back and refuses to accept his request of servanthood but the son is treated like an honoured guest. First comes the robe, symbolizing high distinction, indicating a new beginning. Then we have the shoes and the ring; shoes were a luxury designating the position of a freeman; the ring symbolizes power, authority. The preparation of the fatted calf designated a very special occasion. All these actions on the part of the father are evidence of forgiveness and reinstatement of the son.

Jeremias states

the parable describes with touching simplicity what God is like, his goodness, his grace, his boundless mercy, his abounding love. He rejoices over the return of the lost, like the father who prepared the feast of welcome.⁸⁶

Not only that but Jeremias goes on to state that the parable served a double function.

⁸⁶Jeremias, loc. cit., p. 131.

The parable was addressed to men who were like the elder brother, men who were offended at the gospel. An appeal must be addressed to their conscience. To them Jesus says: "Behold the greatness of God's love for his lost children, and contrast it with your own joyless, loveless, thankless, and self-righteous lives".⁸⁷

Jesus, then, in justifying his own ministry, "his receiving sinners and eating with them", presents the listeners with a picture, with a situation to which they must react. It is worthy to note that Jesus does not end this parable, as recorded in Luke, with a "go and do thou likewise" recommendation. But he leaves the situation open-ended. It is up to the listener to make a decision. Out of his relationships with sinners and from the criticisms of the Pharisees, Jesus was able to present a story-situation. From these positive and negative relationships he was able to provide a means by which the people were able to understand a bit better their God and also themselves. What they do with this new insight is up to them.

(Rollo May would call this type of situation the healing power of the symbol, in which the actual contemporary situation is presented, is brought before the person, and also where new ethical insights and possibilities are presented.)

The parable of the Prodigal Son revealed that the parable is a symbol and used symbolic imagery. Examples of symbolic imagery are numerous: the father as a symbol of God; the eldest son as the symbol of the traditional religious

⁸⁷Ibid.

institutions; the younger son as a symbol of a sinner; the ring as a symbol of authority. These are all symbols understood by the listener; they would draw him into the meaning of the parable quickly.

With this example of the parable of the Prodigal Son are noted some of the aspects of an effective communicator. By discussing this parable in the light of our findings on the symbol, some of the characteristics of an effective communicator are revealed. The parable spoke in the situation where the people were at present. It used concepts and imagery which the people would understand. It, thus, drew the people into a dialogue situation with the speaker.

In a sense the political cartoon as a means of communication performs a similar function as did the parable in Jesus' day. The political cartoon has been defined as "A simplification of the complex by the deftest shorthand which provides a most comprehensive view of the world"⁸⁸. Also the political cartoon is a symbol. The function of such a means of communication is to provide an insight into a situation, into a reality which is important, of which the people must be aware and because of which must act. It serves in a sense to provide a handle by which the reader can grasp a situation and because he is able to grasp it can do something about it. In other words, the political

⁸⁸Russel Lynes, "After Hours", Harper's Magazine, ed. W. Morris (New York: Harper's Magazine Inc., Sept, 1968), p. 23.

cartoon, because it is a symbol, performs the functions of and fits the definition of a symbol as postulated in the previous section.

The political cartoon is a creation of a skilled individual who sees a need to aid the people in seeing reality. The symbol, according to definition and usage, performs this; it is often the only means by which this reality can be understood. An example of such a means of communication would be beneficial at this point.

On Wednesday, November 26, 1969, the following cartoon appeared in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record.

Kitchener-Waterloo Record

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Published by Kitchener-Waterloo Record Ltd., 20 Queen St. N., Kitchener, Ont.

JOHN E. MOTZ, President and Publisher

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K. A. (SANDY) BAIRD, Assistant Publisher

WILLIAM J. MOTZ, Secretary

CARL B. SCHMIDT, Editor in Chief

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1969



The Fifth - and Foulest - Horseman

This cartoon, "The Fifth---and Foulest---Horseman", portrays what it means when this means of communication is defined as the "simplification of the complex". This is an interpretation of the pollution crisis that is before each one of us today.

As this example indicates, the language of the cartoon is a symbolic one to which almost everyone brings some amount of literacy. The five different horsemen are symbolic of the many different disasters which our world faces. The four horsemen, hunched together in the cartoon, are the traditional four in the Book of Revelation of the New Testament (chapter 6, verses 2-8). In Revelation these four horsemen were symbolic of the disaster which the inhabitants of the earth would face before the final day. This symbolic imagery has been used extensively throughout the history of mankind when speaking about disasters such as war, famine, etc. So the reader would bring to it his own understanding and interpretation of what the four horsemen stood for. He would also bring to the picture the thoughts present in his mind concerning the pollution problem which has received much publicity and comment in the last few months.

The beauty and effectiveness of the cartoon is that this editorial, pictorial message can be grasped at a glance. The message this particular cartoon carries is a deep and thought-jarring one. Not only is pollution added to the four horsemen of destruction to make them five in number, but this

fifth horseman is a frightening experience for the four others. This new entrance takes priority over the other four. Its deadliness, its danger far exceeds that of the others. It will be difficult to deal with.

The political cartoon as a symbol has certain characteristics. The author of such a means of communication must keep certain things in mind as he creates his message. His message in order that it be relevant must touch upon something which is uppermost in the mind of the readers. The pollution problem is a much talked about and read about issue. The reader has been immersed in this type of propaganda for quite some time. So, in this particular cartoon the issue is relevant. This is one thing of which the author must be aware.

Another awareness (this deals again with the reader) is contained in the question: What type of sketch will best carry what I want to say? How can I emphasize my main point without losing the reader in some obscure symbol? The means of presentation (in this case, the caricature) is vital. If the caricature is not easily recognizable by the reader, the message it is to carry is lost.

In order for the author of a cartoon to be successful in meeting the above two requirements, he must be very much involved with the issues and people of the society in which he lives. And this in itself is a requirement for the author to fulfil.

The author of the cartoon depicting pollution desired to communicate to his readers the emergency situation which was facing them all. Jesus, in his parable of the Prodigal Son, desired to place before his listeners a clarification of the situation, of the relationship God has with his people. In both cases something was being offered to the people. In both cases this something carried with it a new or a deeper awareness of the present situation.

The how of depicting this new or deeper awareness is important. In the case of a means of communication using symbols this depiction of the new is usually handled in the following way. Both the parable and the political cartoon use the "traditional" symbol but also add the new twist, the anti-climax idea. Examples will prove this idea much better.

In the Toronto Globe and Mail daily newspaper on Tuesday, November 25, 1969, this cartoon appeared.

—THE GLOBE AND MAIL, TUESDAY, NOV. 25, 1969 7—



Dennison: a decent man for whom even his severest critics have some sympathy.

The cartoon is attempting to provide a view of Mr. Dennison of Toronto who was in the running for mayor of Toronto at the time. The obvious "traditional" symbol used is the legend of the Roman emperor, Nero, fiddling while Rome burned. The Nero qualities are not very flattering to say the least. The new, the anti-climax, is the fact that Mr. Dennison is the fiddler; it is not Nero.

In the parable a similar occurrence can be observed. Take for example the parable of the Widow and the Judge, recorded in the Gospel of Luke.

In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, "Vindicate me against my adversary." For a while he refused; but afterwards he said to himself, "Though I neither fear God nor regard man, I will vindicate her or she will wear me out by her continual coming."⁸⁹

The "traditional" symbol found here is the widow: the typical representative of those who need to be defended against exploitation. Because she was a widow, it is taken for granted that her cause is just. Thus sympathy would be for the underdog, the widow.

The judge who neither feared God nor respected the rights of man would be the "traditional" symbol for injustice. The figure would immediately be recognized as that representing bribery, dishonesty, failure to receive fair justice at the hands of the court system.

The new, the anti-climax, lies in the fact that the

⁸⁹Luke 18: 2-5. R.S.V.

judge gives in. In this anti-climax there even lies a bit of humour. In verse five, the translation of "lest she weary me" is literally translated by the phrase, "lest she come at last and beat me". So it could be said that though the judge neither feared God nor respected man, he had a healthy respect for the widow's wrath!

The parable is symbol and makes use of symbolic imagery. As this fact has been discussed, the characteristics of an effective communicator have also been revealed and augmented.

One vital characteristic of any effective communication is that the speaker knows the listener and allows that listener the freedom and the responsibility of making up his own mind. This aspect of the parable must be discussed.

The parable is a means of communication by which the speaker brings the listener to the point of understanding and grasping the concept he is attempting to portray. For example, the parable of the Prodigal Son pointed to a new insight into the nature of God. So, in a sense, the parable must be such that the individuals hearing it must see themselves in it; they must also be carried by it to the point where they can make a decision.

The parable, like the characteristics of a symbol, derives its substance, its material from the everyday happenings in life. This parable, using incidents familiar, is able to point beyond itself to something which is untouchable, non-understandable except through some physical, concrete means.

Linnemann in discussing this basic concept says that the parable has one point of comparison, the tertium comparationis. From her discussion on this point the symbolic characteristics and function of the parable appear clearer.

This point of comparison, the tertium comparationis, is the cardinal point, which binds together the picture and the reality for which it is coined; or as it is usually put, the "picture part" and the "reality part". The terms "picture part" and "reality part" make the distinction between what the narrative portrays and what it means, what the parable is intended to say.⁹⁰

In order for this "point of comparison" to perform its function fully, the listener must be involved. Linnemann continues by saying that "the correspondence between the picture and reality depends therefore on the narrator allowing room in the parable for the evaluation of the listener"⁹¹.

In order for the listener to be moved to the point of evaluation, to be moved to take a stand, the parable must grasp the listener in such a way that he becomes involved fully in that to which the parable is speaking.

In a very real way the parable, then, is "a successful parable as a language-event in a double sense: it creates a new possibility in the situation, and it compels the man addressed to a decision"⁹².

This idea of the parable opening up the new understanding

⁹⁰Linnemann, loc. cit., p. 24.

⁹¹Ibid., 27.

⁹²Ibid., 31.

or the new awareness is touched upon by many writers. Amos Wilder quotes Ernst Fuchs as saying:

The rise of the Gospel is called a "speech-event". By this Fuchs means a new departure, not just in the sense of a new religious teaching but rather the opening up of a new dimension of man's awareness, a new breakthrough in language and symbolization.⁹³

Wilder goes on to speak about Jesus' use of the parables. As he speaks he touches upon another aspect of the parable which again indicates the symbolic characteristics of it.

The rhetorical forms we are concerned with are not only governed by general world-view but also by particular social pattern. Within the single aphorism or parable of Jesus, or the gospel genre...all these language phenomenon are the deposit of a movement: community products.⁹⁴

Here is evidenced a comparison with the idea of "community products" and that which Tillich postulated as he discussed the fourth characteristic of the symbol.

There are two other important points made by Wilder. These points are essential when looking at the effectiveness of the parable's ability to communicate. They also augment the thesis that the parable does shed light on some of the characteristics of an effective communicator.

According to Wilder, some of the parables, not all but some, are symbolic in character. This is tied in with the argument dealing with the fact that the parable has a revelatory aspect over against the example aspect. When

⁹³Amos Wilder, The Language of the Gospel (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964), p. 18.

⁹⁴Ibid., 34.

Wilder speaks about the revelatory character of the parable he does not speak of those which end up with a "go and do thou likewise" phrase. In explaining this distinction Wilder uses the parable of the Lost Sheep as an example.

But the parable of the Lost Sheep....the upshot is not that we should go and do likewise. We have rather an extended image---the shepherd's revival of the lost sheep and his joy---a narrative image which reveals rather than exemplifies.⁹⁵

The discussion, earlier in this chapter, on the parable of the Prodigal Son would be an attempt to reveal this revelatory character of this type of parable.

The other point, very important in Wilder's thinking, has already been mentioned.

What is of special interest in the parables of Jesus is not only that he told stories but that these stories are so human and realistic....the impact of the parables lay in their immediate realistic authenticity.⁹⁶

This aspect again touches on the idea of the listener's ability to see themselves as part of the parable picture-symbol and because of it be moved accordingly. Out of the matrix of his knowledge of God and his awareness of the people with whom he was involved, came the material for Jesus' parables.

Ernst Fuchs as quoted by Wilder exemplifies this last point in the following way:

Without question, it is from within this sphere of

⁹⁵Ibid., 80.

⁹⁶Ibid., 81.

community and family living that Jesus speaks. It is from this life that he takes illustrations for his parables. We see men going about the streets and knocking at windows, we hear the sounds of their feasts, the peasant goes into the field, sows and reaps; the wife occupies herself with the small stretch of ground behind the house. We recognize the rich and the poor, the respected and the scoundrel, gaiety and distress, sorrow and thanksgiving. But all that is not just scenery, not just material for a poet.....Jesus is not just using the details of this world as a springboard but means precisely this world.....Jesus calls for faith and therefore decision....But what the hearer now does he does in the same area of daily life that Jesus evokes so vividly and plastically in his sayings and parables.⁹⁷

Thus the listener has no difficulty in grasping Jesus' images for Jesus speaks from where and to where the man is. His movement, his subsequent decision, comes from where he is; he does not necessarily have to move to some other sphere of existence to commence his reactions.

The parables, thus described, point to some of the characteristics of an effective communicator. Because of the parable's ability to take the listener into consideration, to allow the listener room for dialogue and movement, it allows and aids the individual in his growth as a person.

Geraint Jones also speaks on this aspect of the parable. He sets the theme for his writings when he says:

the parables are symbolical but not allegorical; indeed purely allegorical traits are found but rarely in the parables (as for example in the Sower, the Mustard Seed and the Tares). It is not allegory but symbol when sowing, growth, ripening, reaping, fishing, are used as "figurative representations" of

⁹⁷Ibid., 83.

comparable incidents and operations of the kingdom.⁹⁸

No clearer statement have I found concerning the symbolic character of the parable. The phrase, "figurative representations", is a beautiful summary definition of the symbol; it also indicates well the function of the parable. In this phrase the effectiveness of the communicative ability of the parable is hinted at.

Briefly, in discussing the parable's characteristics, Jones compares its function with that of art.

One of the functions of art (thought by no means the only one) in Charles Morgan's phrase, is to provide "news of reality not to be expressed in other terms". Art is not an end in itself but a re-presentation of experience.⁹⁹

To push this art function, it can be said that the cartoonish is an artist. His artistry lies in his ability to portray through means of caricature the feelings, the emotions, the hard facts of a situation. The cartoon of the five horsemen represents the situation. Within this picture lies almost everything that can be said about pollution, from the danger of it to the question of what will we do about it.

The parable is, in a sense, art. Its creator, using the material at hand, weaves together a word-picture, a vivid description of what he sees. In "painting" this word-picture, he sets before the listener the "news of reality", the situation

⁹⁸Jones, loc. cit., p. 15.

⁹⁹Ibid., 163.

as it is. It reveals to the listener a new interpretation of something he had before him but was unable to see or to grasp.

Essentially this chapter has dealt with the parable as a symbol. Through definition, example and comparison with the political cartoon this fact has been realized.

Based on the material presented in this chapter it is also evidenced that the parable (with its symbolic qualities) as a means of communication has shed light on some of the characteristics of an effective communicator.

Jesus' use of the parable points to the previous statement. Jesus was in dialogue with the people around him. He knew their situation and their way of life; he knew their thoughts and questions. As was said earlier, his parables grew not in isolation but out of a particular situation, a particular action he had taken. He had spent his time teaching a gospel. It was time to relate to the people how he saw their reactions, thus the parable of the Sower. Why he dealt with sinners was augmented by the Prodigal Son parable. One of the characteristics of an effective communicator is that it is relevant.

Their relevancy also lay in the fact that they used material familiar and easily recognized by the listener. The sower sowing seeds was a familiar situation. A family scene was nothing new. The judicial system being corrupt was not something which never happened.

Thus in looking at the parables we see two aspects of

an effective communicator. It deals with a relevant topic; it uses material common and understandable. The parable itself was also a form of teaching that was popular at that time.

In a sense then the effective communicator takes the listener into consideration by being aware of where he is. Also another characteristic of an effective communicator is tied in with the word "dialogue". A true awareness of the recipient of the message necessitates the opportunity provided for the listener to respond. It might be said that the means of communication must be open-ended. If it is successful in obtaining the individual's attention, it must also provide the situation in which an individual can bring himself with his ideas and feelings into the picture. Effective communication is dialogical; it is between two people. Be it noted that one of the characteristics of the parable was that it often invited the opinion of the listener. Be it noted that the political cartoon presented a picture; the response was up to the reader in that situation.

Also an effective communicator serves an organizing function as well as opens up doors. For instance, the Prodigal Son parable served this function. Jesus, who was preaching about God and His love, was associating with sinners. The traditional religious leaders frowned upon this practice. The people were caught between two forces. The parable brought together this whole situation; it revealed symbolically what God was like; it also revealed what the traditional

reigionlsts were like. The situation was organized in this parable; the decision was left up to the listener. The door was open; it was up to the listener if he wanted to go through. The cartoon concerning the pollution problem served the same function.

The study of the parable as symbol has shed some light on the characteristics of an effective communicator.

CONCLUSION

We have travelled a rather long and complicated road. Basically the reason for travelling this road was to crystallize some of the characteristics of an effective communicator. By gaining an understanding of the symbol and its functions, these characteristics came to the surface. By studying the parable in the light of our knowledge of the symbol these characteristics were revealed in action.

An understanding and an awareness of the characteristics of an effective communicator are vital. They are vital because man is a communicating being. It is through communication, through interaction one with another, that man continues the process of becoming human.

Man, by nature, is a being who is searching. To mature, to grow, to gain an identity are phrases descriptive of this search. To find a niche in life, to find a goal, to recognize oneself and be recognized as an individual with value and worth are important areas in one's life. Man cannot do this in isolation but must find that for which he is searching by interactions and dialogue with fellow human beings. This is basically why Virginia Satir, as quoted in the first section, made the statement concerning man's survival dependent on man's ability and need to communicate.

This is one basic reason why men such as Rollo May and Mircea Eliade claim that symbolism is again taking hold. The logical, rational way of viewing life is limited in its scope. There are many things in an individual's experiences

which cannot be explained by an equation. Man is hindered in his search and his growth if he cannot somehow grasp these experiences and attempt to understand them. The symbol is one means of grasping and understanding. Its ability to become one with that which it symbolizes serves to provide some form of concreteness to an experience, to a "transcendent" occurrence. It is essential that the symbol again becomes important and a vital part in an individual's communication set up. It is essential that the symbol be understood for what it is: a means by which man can move beyond his given situation and experience life in terms of the possible. It is essential that it be put into use.

The study of the symbolic qualities of the parable can serve as a working example of how symbolism aids a process of dialogue. This does not necessarily mean that everyone should go around speaking in parables, but it does reveal how symbols have become a real and helpful part of a communicative method.

There are many tools or methods available to man and for man. The symbol is an important and vital tool. The examples of the parable and the political cartoon are two examples of how symbolism has become part of a communication method and how it has aided this communication.

Methods of communication are used by many different individuals and many different organizations. For instance, the church has a very basic function to perform: that of communicating. The school and the business firm have the

same function.

In the scope of this thesis and this conclusion I cannot hope to evaluate the communicative systems of people and organizations. That in itself would be a thesis.

But looking at the importance of communication and the need for effective communication, I feel I must set down an initial set of criteria which will serve as guidelines for my own communication.

1. Be aware of yourself and others is the initial criterion to consider. It is essential when in the process of interacting with others that one takes into consideration these others. They have experienced aspects of life, of reality just as the speaker has. They have insights, ideas, and questions which are a real part of them and which they feel they must share. The speaker's position as speaker does not necessarily mean he is the answer man. No man that I know of is a one hundred percent perfect answer man. Answers, insights, discoveries are found in interaction. They are revealed as two or more people search together to find them. To not allow an individual to react and interact is to not give that individual the opportunity to be an individual. If an individual cannot interact, he, in a sense, is not being allowed to be a person; his ideas and thoughts are not looked upon as being worthwhile.

This awareness means a number of things when one looks at the methods one uses for communication. Basically, the

method used must be geared to allow for a giving and a receiving. It must be open-ended in the sense that it gives the listener the opportunity to react. In other words, it must allow for dialogue and thus growth and maturation on the part of the individuals involved.

2. The topic is relevant. An awareness on the part of the speaker of what is taking place within and around a group of people, a community is essential. People do not grow, they do not become individuals, in some kind of isolation test-tube environment. They are constantly bombarded on all sides by many different influences and people. They are immersed in their own historical setting which sometimes is enlightening and oftentimes is very frustrating. Communication and dialogue are processes by which an individual in such an historical setting can make sense out of what is going on around him. A method of communication serves to put form and substance to his existence.

When dealing with people in the contemporary environment, it is important that the method used, the means of communication, fit the tone of said environment. It seems sort of ridiculous to play a fox-trot to a group of psychedelic-minded teenagers. It would be ridiculous to talk about how to cook a nice juicy steak over a barbeque to a group of people who are immersed in poverty situations. Even more ridiculous is to use images and symbols which grew out of the 18th century in a worship setting of the 20th

century. The experiences and needs are naturally different. The means used must meet the people where they are.

3. Be involved. In order for communication to be effective and meaningful, involvement is necessary. To be aware of what is presently at stake necessitates being involved in said situation. If it is impossible to be personally involved, at least make the situation present in your mind. There is nothing more pathetic and more deadly than a speaker talking "knowingly" about something which is beyond his grasp or understanding.

4. Method used is relevant. This was touched upon in the second criterion, but deserves further clarification. Tillich spoke of the symbol and said that when it ceases to function as such it dies. It is necessary to be aware of this occurrence and allow it to happen. Too many times a means of communication which was relevant in the past is clung unto only because of its past relevance. The liturgy in the church today can be a prime example of such clinging. For instance, many hymns which are the good old favourites in the field of sacred music were once folk songs which were popular and meaningful for the people at that time. The only reason they stay in existence is that they have been around so long. In this specific instance, what happens to the younger generation when the church keeps clinging to the good old hymns? What about the young person's music? What about his own individual experiences?

If a means of communication dies, let it die gracefully. Bury it and allow a new means evolve from the experiences we have as people today.

These are a few criteria which I see growing from this thesis. They can serve as measuring rods, as evaluations of my own methods of communication. They will not serve solely to develop an effective means of communication. They will only serve to evaluate a means when and as it is developed. An effective means of communication grows as people encounter one another in an honest search for what is real, in an honest attempt to meet one another as persons and thus grow and mature as human beings because of it.

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Errata:

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p. 1	l. 17	read	closed
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p. 4	l. 26	read	fifth
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